[redacted]

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

17 December 1962

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

25X1C8a

SUBJECT: US Position Paper on [redacted] 1901/62

1. In general, we concur in the major estimates made in 25X1C8a [redacted] 1901/62, "Communist Chinese Air Capability Against India," dated 4 December 1962. Our comments are concerned, for the most part, with supplementary information or differences in factual detail, some of them very slight. In addition there are a few points of disagreement over interpretation. The significant points of difference and agreement are considered below in the order of their appearance in the 25X1C8a [redacted] study.

25X1C8a

2. ([redacted], para. 2). We believe that the Chinese air forces rank fourth in world numerical strength; in combat strength we believe they rank third.

25X1C8a

3. ([redacted], para. 5). We are in general agreement with the judgements made in this paragraph but would suggest that the last sentence be amended to read: "Even in the unlikely event of its

[redacted]

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
Downgrading and
Declassification

economic problems and ideological differences being resolved in the near future, it would be several years before China could significantly improve her aircraft production capabilities."

25X1C8a

4. [redacted], para. 8). Our latest figures for air order of battle credit the CCAF and CCNAF with a combined strength of about 2,650 aircraft, including:

1,920	Jet fighters (Plus 30 ground attack aircraft)
325	Jet light bombers
105	Piston light bombers
15	Medium piston bombers
40	Piston special ground attack aircraft
30	Jet special ground attack aircraft

We have firm evidence of two TU-16's (BADGERs), but do not know whether these are operational. They were probably delivered to the Chinese by the USSR prior to mid-1960. We estimate the strength of the transport force to be approximately 195 obsolete piston short-range aircraft.

25X1C8a

5. ([redacted], para. 9). We believe that the Chinese have approximately 260 airfields, including 135 which are suitable for jet fighters or light bombers, and 30 which can be used for jet medium bombers.

25X1C8a

6. ([redacted], para. 11). Not all Chinese airfields usable for light bomber or fighter action against India are at very high altitudes. Such airfields as Hotien (Khotan) and Soche, which are most likely to be used against the Ladakh-Jammu-Kashmir area, are at 3,000 and 4,400 feet elevation respectively. In regard to radius of action and/or bomb load for jets operating at airfields of high elevation, we believe that a number of operational factors must be considered. Air temperature as well as runway length is important in estimating required take-off distances. We do not believe that reduction in radius of action and/or bomb load would arbitrarily be required in all instances. At Lhasa, at 14,000 feet elevation and 0° Centigrade, we believe that a BEAGLE could take off in approximately one-half of the 11,000 feet that the

25X1C8a

[redacted] estimate.

25X1C8a

7. ([redacted], para. 13). We would suggest the following wording for paragraph 13: "The medium bomber force possesses a very limited

strategic bombing capability due to its small size and obsolescence. The BULL being a piston-engined bomber would be highly vulnerable to jet interception. We are not sure whether the two identified BADGERs are fully operational."

25X1C8a

8. After [redacted], paragraph 13, we would suggest the addition of a paragraph on deployment to read as follows: "At present virtually all of the Chinese bomber force is located in the Sian area, none of it being present in Tibet or Sinkiang. In times past BATs, BEAGLEs, and BULLs have operated in Tibet from Kaerhmu. The TU-2, with a 400-n.m. radius and minimum bomb load of 3,000 pounds, would be the most reliable aircraft for tactical strikes because of its slower take-off speed and greater maneuverability at low altitudes. The IL-28 could bomb targets in northern India from bases in Szechuan (Chengtu), Tibet and Sinkiang. The TU-4 and TU-16, with a combat radius of about 2,000 miles, could cover virtually all of India from their base in Sian."

25X1C8a

9. ([redacted], para. 14). China's air defense capabilities in the Himalayan area are limited due to insufficient radar coverage and the apparent absence of any jet fighter aircraft. The nearest jet fighter unit is probably located at Chengtu, but units could

be deployed to Lhasa, Tingri Dzong, and Puli. The Chinese have a limited early warning capability in the Ladakh area, but are not equipped to handle tactical intercept air operations from bases in Tibet. Within China Proper we have firm evidence of operational surface-to-air missile sites at Peiping, San Yuan (near Sian), and the Shuangchengtzu missile test facility.

25X1C8a

10. ([redacted], para. 18). We would suggest the following language for the first sentence: "The Chinese Communists would use transport aircraft in airborne operations; however, extensive airborne operations are unlikely if they would mean a major disruption of normal and essential air transport operations."

25X1C8a

11. ([redacted], para. 19). We would suggest deletion of the second sentence. In regard to the third sentence, our latest estimate is that a total of 290 tactical aircraft could be committed to operations against India involving 180 jet fighters, 50 jet light bombers, and 60 piston light bombers. These aircraft could operate from 6 airfields, 4 of which are within the area to be supported by a maximum of 500 short tons per day.

25X1C8a

25X1C8a

12. ([redacted], para. 20). We agree with the [redacted] that the key to air operations would be the amount of logistic support,

particularly POL, which could be provided to forward bases. However, the first half of the second sentence appears to contradict the opening sentence.

25X1C8a

13. ([redacted], para. 21). We also have no evidence of stock piling of air supplies in the Tibetan area. However, we have some problems with the remainder of this paragraph. We believe that the Chinese can divert 500 short tons daily, out of the overall maximum of 2,240 tons sent into Tibet, to support air operations against India from Tibet and the part of Sinkiang north of Ladakh. Some 12 transports (8 at Hotien and 4 at Lhasa) are probably already operating in the area. We believe that up to 50 small transport aircraft could be diverted to support operations against India without imposing unacceptable restrictions on the overall Chinese air transport system. Each transport sortie could average probably a maximum of two tons. Under optimum conditions, the 50 transports diverted to the Tibet area could supply some_____short tons daily from railheads in China Proper.

25X1C8a

14. ([redacted], para. 23). We believe that the logistic requirements for carrying out the suggested operations are somewhat lower than those given by the [redacted] Thus, jet light bomber sorties

25X1C8a

would probably require under three short tons per flying hour and jet fighter sorties would require one and one-half short tons per flying hour. We estimate that piston light bomber sorties would require about one short ton per flying hour and jet ground attack sorties would require slightly more than one and one-half short tons per flying hour. We assume the same number of sorties flown in each category as the [redacted].

25X1C8a

15. ([redacted], para. 25). Of all Tibetan airfields, we believe that the Chinese are most likely to use Nagchu Dzong for jet light bomber operations.

25X1C8a

16. ([redacted], para. 26). Contrary to the [redacted] view, we believe that BEAGLEs could operate against Delhi as well as Calcutta, the former operations being from Soche airfield north of Ladakh. We do not believe that the potential threat from Chinese medium bombers "would be small" because of the small numbers which could be launched. The psychological effect on the Indian population and armed forces could be very sizable.

25X1C8a

17. ([redacted], para. 27). We concur that raids by Chinese piston bombers would likely result in heavy casualties. However, until Indian early warning capabilities are substantially improved,

Chinese jet bombers could penetrate Indian defenses in limited numbers without suffering intolerable losses.

25X1C8a

18. ([redacted] para. 30). We would suggest the following substitute wording for this paragraph: "In view of the limitations of and other calls upon the transport force, extensive airborne operations are unlikely. The air situation, however, would not necessarily be unfavorable to the Chinese in all areas where they might contemplate limited airborne operations."

25X1C8a

19. ([redacted], para. 31b). We do not believe that China's ability to wage an air campaign against India would be seriously handicapped by the need to maintain her present air posture. We agree that China is unlikely to initiate air operations unless India does so, and believe that in such an event China would claim that its action was in retaliation.

25X1C8a

20. ([redacted], para. 31c). We agree that the Chinese could mount only light, sporadic raids against India with piston bombers. However, it is likely that Chinese BEAGLEs and, possibly, BADGERs could be effective against Indian targets in sustained operations involving limited numbers of aircraft until such times as the Indian air defense system is substantially improved. Moreover, we would

hesitate to ignore or minimize the strategic and political significance of even token Chinese raids on Indian cities and military targets.

25X1C8a

21. ([redacted], para. 31d). We believe the Chinese Air Force could provide some air defense in the Tibetan area. Although the five airfields most likely to be used in operations against India (Hotien, Soche, Lhasa, Nagchu Dzong, and Yu Shu) would be vulnerable to air attack, we do not believe that this would deter the Chinese from mounting operations from them.

25X1C8a

22. ([redacted], para. 31e). We believe that the Chinese are capable of undertaking limited airborne operations, although this appears unlikely under present circumstances. There is some evidence that limited supply drops have already taken place.